

Montgomery College - Rockville Campus

Smoke Free Policy Impact on Neighborhood Meeting
Friday, December 12, 2008, 8:00 a.m.
Provost's Conference Room, #106 Macklin Tower

Attendees

Dr. Judy E. Ackerman, Vice President and Provost
Ms. Helen Brewer, (Acting) Associate Dean for Student Development
Mr. David Capp, Associate Vice President for College Facilities
Ms. Roberta Farber, representing Plymouth Woods
Ms. Jennifer Kimball, Assistant to the City Manager, City of Rockville
Ms. Jacki Moffi, Assistant to the Vice President and Provost
Mr. Mike Phillips, representing College Gardens
Mr. Don Smith, Director of Evening/Weekend Office

The meeting began shortly after 8:00 a.m. After introductions, Dr. Ackerman provided background regarding the purpose of the meeting and a general agenda. She indicated that during this meeting we wanted to identify the interests that the College, Plymouth Woods, and College Gardens had related to the College's Tobacco Free policy. Following that, the group would consider options.

As background, Dr. Ackerman indicated that in September she had been contacted by Elyse Gussow, President of the Board of Directors for Plymouth Woods Condominium, Inc. and Gerry Cashin, Secretary of Plymouth Woods. A meeting was held on September 26 that both Ms. Cashin and Ms. Gussow attended. The meeting addressed the following ongoing concerns:

1. College students/employees parking in the Plymouth Woods area
2. College students/employees parking on Princeton Place
3. Smoking in woods, Anderson Park, Polinger Park
4. Litter and debris in the above areas

After the September meeting, actions that were agreed upon by those present included placing trash receptacles by the fence in Princeton Place, Plymouth Woods sending a letter to the editor of the Rockville Campus student newspaper, The Advocate, to encourage students not to smoke and park in the neighborhood, and Dr. Ackerman preparing a letter for the Plymouth Woods newsletter. Dean Brewer reported that to her knowledge The Advocate did not receive a letter to the editor from Plymouth Woods. At this meeting there was a discussion about residential parking permits for Plymouth Woods and/or Princeton Place in order to reduce the College related traffic in the area. Ms. Gussow said that she would raise the issue with the Plymouth Woods board.

At the meeting on December 12, Ms. Farber reported that crowds in Princeton Place are largest in early and late afternoon, and problems include smoking (including marijuana), littering, loitering, inappropriate intimate behavior, unsavory trash (e.g., used condom), pollution caused by cigarette smoke and butts, speeding on Princeton Place, and strangers in the neighborhood during the day when there are mostly mothers with young children and elderly residents present. There are many cars parked on Princeton Place and some in Plymouth Woods.

Ms. Farber reported that Ms. Christine Borger submitted a request to the City for permit parking between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Princeton Place. Dr. Ackerman agreed to submit a letter to the City to support this request (Ms. Kimball provided contact information below). Ms. Farber said that many residents are intimidated about approaching students who have gathered to smoke and hang out. Ms. Farber passed around photos showing a large pile of curbside dumped trash from one car. She stated that although MC is commended by the neighbors for initiating a smoke free policy, the result of the policy has created a problem for the neighbors, one that the College, not the neighbors, created and, as such, should solve.

Dr. Ackerman reported that as she became aware of additional neighborhood complaints she contacted Rockville City police Chief Terry Treschuk. She reported that Chief Treschuk said that the Police Department had not received calls about loitering, littering, or disruptive behavior in Princeton Place. However, based on their conversation, the Chief said that officers would step up their patrols in the area. He also said that if people observe illegal activities they should call the police.

Mr. Capp pointed out that dumping trash is illegal, that neighbors can make anonymous complaints with the police by submitting license numbers of offending vehicles, and that officers respond to communities based on number and frequency of complaints received.

Mr. Phillips stated that many College Gardens residents are feeling uncomfortable in their neighborhood because of students congregating in roadways, cars speeding in residential areas, and neighbors being intimidated by students. Basically, neighbors' quality of life has been impacted by the influx of disorderly students since the smoking ban was instituted.

There was discussion about the College installing a tall (at least 6') fence between the Campus and neighborhood to close the opening between the neighborhood and the campus. Mr. Capp stated that the fence would allow the College to safely define its boundaries. Everyone agreed that although the fence would inconvenience many people, including those who do not smoke in the cul de sac, installing a fence that curtails access between the adjacent neighborhood and Campus may be the best way to eliminate the offensive behaviors. Mr. Phillips noted that it would be important for him to get input from the whole College Gardens neighborhood on the option of closing the opening in the fence. This question was raised: Could the gate be accessed a various times (e.g., emergencies, 4th of July)? This possibility could be explored, but may be unlikely.

Mr. Phillips offered that a fence may be a last resort, and that it was important to determine, what "success" looked like when other actions are taken—respectful smokers? Less trash? Ms. Farber stated that success would be no smoking in Princeton Place and no parking on Princeton Place, which is an attractive place to lounge.

It was agreed that places where people could smoke publicly, on Mannakee street and on Hungerford, needed to be made more appealing so students, who complain about using the streets (too distant). Perhaps they would venture away from Princeton if the streets had places to sit. One option discussed as a way to make Princeton Place less attractive for smoking in the spring was to place a table with smoking cessation information and volunteers at the cul de sac.

During the meeting, Ms. Brewer reported on how students who violate the smoking ban are handled, the use of "positive reinforcement" to encourage students and others not to smoke, and the pros and cons of applying peer pressure from students who don't smoke on those who do as a way to curtail activity near Princeton Place. Mr. Smith discussed what he has experienced when interacting with smokers in cul de sac in Princeton Place and learned from Healthy Campus advocates, who cite those who smoke on campus. Ms. Kimball provided information about how the City could support the various recommendations discussed.

It was agreed that the following actions would be taken:

- Sign(s) would be placed by Montgomery College near the cul de sac in Princeton Place to encourage smokers to use Mannakee Street or Hungerford Drive. (Ms. Moffi will draft sign copy).

- Dr. Ackerman will send a letter of support for residential permit parking on Princeton Place:

Ms. Rebecca Torma, Transportation Planner
City of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850-2364

- Montgomery College will include information about appropriate off campus smoking locations in student orientation materials next semester, with the smoking policy materials distributed to students, and on maps (e.g., parking maps). The College will continue educating students on appropriate smoking locations each subsequent semester because there are a significant amount of new students each semester.

- Roberta and Mike will coordinate to prepare a letter to the editor for the College newspaper (possibly with photos) for the second week of February.

- Ms. Kimball will investigate installing 2-3 benches at sites identified by the College both on Mannakee Street and Hungerford Drive to encourage smokers to use these areas.

- Dr. Ackerman would convene this group (and other neighborhood leaders impacted by the matter) in mid-February 2009 to see whether or not there were any changes activities on Princeton Place.

- Ms. Moffi would draft notes (herein) from the December 12, 2008, for distribution no later than Tuesday, December 16, 2008.